



Here are our top, practical insights about life, love, romance, and more. Practical tips to help you live up your marriage and live life together to the fullest.

8 Tips to a Great Marriage

- Want to be Happy?
- Romantic Planning
- Invite God
- Don't Do It Alone
- The Question
- Fighting Fair
- Protect Your Marriage
- Great Sex

TIP#1

Want to be Happy? Make your partner happy!

Persistently watch for ways to praise, protect and please each other — without expecting something in return. It's called *servicing*. It's a key principle toward building a solid marriage.

Serving your spouse is not always easy. It's often inconvenient and unpleasant. Sometimes it's a tangible action or gift; often serving is simply words or acts of love.

To build a great marriage, you need an attitude of service and sacrifice.

Take-away Tips:

- Commit to spending twenty-minutes each day, inventing ways you can meet your spouse's needs.
- Guys: study your wife and understand what speaks to her heart. Regularly ask yourself, *are you providing that for her?* Create new ways to love her, support, and encourage her.
- Wives: Respect Him. Praise his commitment to provide and protect you. Listen to Him and his stories about work, hobbies, and his passions. Speak positively about him to others. Empathize with him when he's unsure of himself.

Check out: *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman.

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TIP#2

Romantic Planning

Words like *plan* and *schedule* don't sound very romantic, but updating your vocabulary is what it takes to inject *spontaneous* romance into your marriage. Life's distractions seldom leave room for impulsive, passionate romance. Sometimes you need to be strategic.

Take-away Tips:

- When you have a romantic thought, take action. Think: IMs, emails, Post-It Notes, Hallmark, florist, dinner reservation. You get the idea. Take initiative. These *acts of love* don't need to be elaborate or expensive.
- Date Nights —get 'em on the calendar! Schedule time to spend together; the activities that connected you to your spouse in the first place. Take time to listen and have fun. Nurture that sense of connection. (By the way, outings with the kids don't qualify.)

TIP#3

Invite God

The bible emphasizes the significance of our spiritual condition — and the importance of being on the same page spiritually. You can't reach full marriage potential if you're in different places spiritually.

It's called *spiritual intimacy*. Your relationship can expand beyond simple physical intimacy into a deep spiritual intimacy.

Why is it important? Spiritual intimacy develops trust, oneness, and closeness; reduces conflict; provides a secure spiritual foundation; introduces hope and joy into your marriage and develops a home environment where there is safety, peace, love and forgiveness.

Take-away Tips:

- Talk about it: What do you believe? What are your religious backgrounds? Growing up, did you attend church?
- Do you attend a church now? If not, a solid first step is to find a church you both agree on and attend regularly. *Why church? How could that stuffy, boring place be good for my marriage?* The right church can provide the foundation you need for learning and relationships.
- Do some reading. Discover a world of relevant resources — in your bookstore and on the web — that can address your toughest questions.
- Try praying together.

For a head start, try growthtrac.com/spiritual

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TIP#4

Don't Do It Alone

Who will you call? When life gets rough — through unemployment, sickness, financial crisis, even death — Who will you turn to? If you've been married a while, you know that "stuff happens". When life goes south, you need to be surrounded by quality people and relationships that count.

Think: *community on a deeper level*. You need close relationships; friends to *do life* with. These are dedicated friends who provide accountability, support, prayer and one-on-one assistance when life gets tough.

And there's a spiritual benefit. The most direct route to spiritual intimacy is to engage in close relationships with other Christians and learn by example. A mentoring relationship, in the context of a small group or a one-on-one connection, will minimize missteps and provide a sounding board and safety net as you move forward.

Take-away Tips:

- Sometimes these relationships are formalized (church small group), sometimes not.
- Is there a quality marriage you look up to? Talk with them and see if you might increase the relational octane. Could you form a *Board of Directors* for your marriage?
- Could your church help facilitate new connections through mentoring or groups?
- Don't do marriage alone. Begin now. Nurture some meaningful relationships.

TIP#5

Ask The Question

You're probably wondering, *one question? How can one question make a difference?* But yes, this question can improve or even save your relationship.

Take-away Tips:

- On your next date night, ask your mate, *on a scale from zero to ten, overall, where would you rate our marriage today?*
- Next question: *as you consider our relationship, what are some specific things we can do over the next week that would move us closer to a ten?*
- Answering these kinds of questions on a weekly basis could reduce long standing issues. Many times we don't feel like loving our mate. We can, however, make the decision to love them by doing the things that strengthen the relationship.

TIP#6

Fight Fair

If there is anything that all marriages have in common, it's conflict. Regardless of how "perfectly matched" a couple thinks they are, conflict is inevitable in any relationship. Learning to handle conflict correctly can greatly strengthen your relationship.

One of the major myths about how we envision great or even good marriages is the assumption that they are problem-free. Well, if not problem-free, at least we think they are conflict-free. The truth is that it is healthy for couples to have conflicts, especially in the early days of their marriage. When two people begin to live together in marriage, there are a lot of adjustments they need to make.

Take-away Tips:

Prepare: Talk about these basic conflict guidelines—*before* your next conflict.

- Pray together about issues
- Find a win-win solution
- Deal with one issue at a time
- Take turns listening — and don't interrupt
- Use "I" statements instead of "you" statements
- Share your perspective without getting emotional
- Understand that you won't agree on every issue
- Compromise! Resolve to find a resolution
- Call a "time out" if needed
- Learn to apologize

TIP#7

Protect Your Marriage

Make a daily decision to have an affair-proof relationship. Couples need to be aware of the treacherous steps that lead to infidelity so they can better protect their marriages. Never assume you've made it; realize you're always at risk.

The best way to affair-proof your marriage is to constantly be working toward having the best marriage possible. The more time we spend nurturing our marriage and making it the most solid marriage possible, we don't need to spend a lot of time thinking about the boundaries, tips, and tricks to affair-proof our marriage.

Take-away Tips:

- Be accountable to someone — preferably a third-party
- Become aware of your choices
- Create boundaries and define a safe distance
- Don't underestimate your vulnerability

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TIP#8

Best Sex

When it comes to romance, men are microwaves and women are crockpots. Hit a man's intimacy button and bing! — Ready in 5-seconds!

For women, it's a slow cooking experience. Prepare ingredients and heat slowly. Carefully stir, check the temperature, and add seasoning. Simmer, lift the lid and check the doneness. Get the picture?

If you think deep intimacy is measured by the *frequency of sex*, think again. What happens "between the times", is more important than "how many times".

Take-away Tips:

- Think of foreplay as an activity that occurs throughout the day.
- Constantly think of creative ways to love and respect your spouse.
- Discover what speaks to your mate's heart: Acts of service? Words of Love? Quality Time? — and do it!